

CBS EVENING NEWS
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USSR/CHERNENKO RATHER: Twelve days ago, Soviet television showed pictures of Konstantin Chernenko at a Kremlin ceremony. It was a Soviet effort to dispel rumors that Chernenko's seven-week absence from public view was health related. But it turns out, as State Department Bill McLaughlin reports tonight, the Soviets showed only part of the pictures.

MCLAUGHLIN: CBS News has learned that Western intelligence sources say the Soviets heavily edited a tape to show Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko in good health. Chernenko was shown congratulating Soviet cosmonauts, but source believed scenes showing Chernenko trembling, faltering and barely able to stand were deleted. They also say analysis of the tape reveals that Chernenko was heavily made-up. The state of Cherenenko's health may be an important factor in the decision by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to meet both presidents (sic) Reagan and Walter Mondale. Gromyko is said to be moving to improve his chances of replacing Chernenko by becoming Moscow's indispensable link with the United States. Sources believe the meetings have also been encouraged by younger officials said to be concerned about inheriting a critically poor relationship with the United States. But Gromyko and his elderly allies in the Politburo are said to be in no mood to relinquish power just yet, so the upcoming Gromyko meetings with Reagan and Mondale may serve to help the old guard leaders stay in power a few years more. Bill McLaughlin, CBS News, the State Department.